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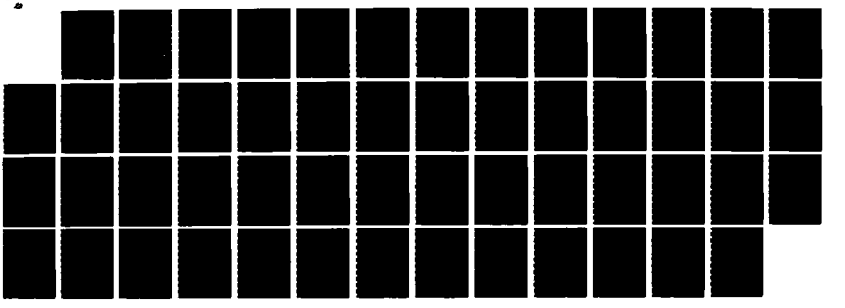

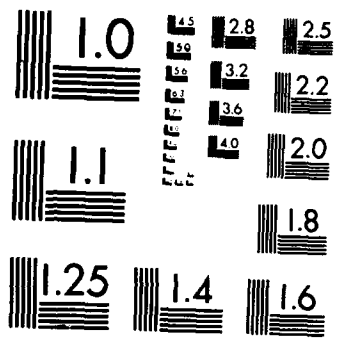

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Three Kinds of Initiative: The Role of Initiative in AirLand Battle Doctirne

by

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The monograph concludes that the concept of initiative as setting the terms of battle needs to be more fully developed in future AirLand Battle documents. This is especially important with respect to the emphasis on the counterattack which needs to be offset by other examples of the exercise of initiative in the defense.

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INTRODUCTION

The Roots of AirLand Battle

The US Army's current doctrine is called AirLand Battle and was formally introduced with the publication of the August 1982 edition of FM 100-5, Operations. In the words of one of the authors, "it represents a major but natural evolutionary change in doctrine and a culmination of our post-Vietnam reorientation."[1] The first major step in that reorientation was taken in 1976 when a FM 100-5 with a radically new perspective hit the streets. The 1976 edition of Operations introduced what came to be known as the "Active Defense" and it was destined to become "one of the most controversial field manuals ever published by the US Army."[2] The Active Defense was an attempt to adapt to the realities of late-twentieth century mid to high-intensity warfare. It emphasized the nature of the Soviet threat and the "new lethality" of modern weapons as demonstrated in the 1973 Middle East War. It focused on the tactical defense and endeavored to prescribe a way to "fight outnumbered and win" in a European scenario.

The Active Defense was criticized on numerous grounds but one recurring theme was that it forfeited the initiative to the attacker. As one observer put it: "the 'active defense' is . . . viewed by many as a peculiarly reactive doctrine, neither consistent with the lessons of history nor appropriate to contemporary tactical requirements."[3] In contrast, initiative figures prominently in AirLand Battle doctrine which emphasizes seizing and retaining the initiative and stresses the need for an offensive spirit in the conduct of all operations. However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that the difference between the two doctrines is merely a matter of offensive versus defensive orientation.

The new FM 100-5 is more descriptive than prescriptive. In contrast to the days of the Active Defense when doctrinal publications were dubbed "How To Fight" manuals, the AirLand Battle edition of FM 100-5 is more of a "How To Think About Fighting" manual. It takes a more comprehensive view of modern warfare and concentrates on the principles which should guide all Army operations rather than addressing

a specific scenario. It is also intended to serve as the principal tool for professional self-education and presents "a stable body of operational and tactical principles, rooted in actual military experience and capable of providing a long-term foundation for the development of more transitory tactics, techniques and procedures."[4] Although AirLand Battle acknowledges the ten classical principles of war, it establishes a further hierarchy of theoretical concepts beginning with four "tenets" (initiative, agility, depth and synchronization) followed by ten "imperatives". Of the four tenets, initiative best captures the spirit of new doctrine. As COL Wass de Czege, one of the principal authors, wrote: "The conduct of the AirLand Battle is based on the broad operational concept of securing the initiative as early as possible and exercising it aggressively to defeat the enemy."[5]

The Problem

Despite the centrality of initiative to AirLand Battle's operational concept, the latest FM 100-5 is inconsistent in its usage of the term. Although it defines initiative as "setting or changing the terms of battle by action", most of the manual treats initiative as if it were an exclusive attribute of the attack.[6] For instance in discussing the defense, "seizing the initiative" invariably means conducting a counterattack. If the tenets of AirLand Battle really apply to the conduct of all operations, initiative should be applicable to both the defense and offense. While this can be reconciled with the concept of initiative as setting the terms of battle, it is incompatible with the majority of the manual's usage which cedes the initiative to the attacker by definition.

This problem is not altogether surprising since initiative has historically been used to convey a variety of meanings. However, now that "initiative" has been elevated to the status of a tenet of AirLand Battle, greater precision of language is required. Either initiative should be used to convey a single meaning or the term should be modified in some way to convey distinct meanings. A similar problem was encountered when the term "operational" entered the US Army's lexicon to designate an intermediate level of war despite its well established

usage in a variety of other military contexts. To avoid confusion, the Army is now increasingly using the term "operational level" when dealing with the level of war. It may be that some further delineation of initiative will likewise be required for clarity.

Purpose and Scope of the Monograph

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of initiative in the defense at the operational-level of war. The first task is to examine the use of term "initiative" in AirLand Battle doctrine as contained in the May 1986 edition of FM 100-5 and relate it to the overall concept of the defense. This same approach will then be used in examining the works of a number of military theorists of both contemporary and historical interest. The observations and insights gleaned from these inquiries will then be used to refine the concept of initiative in the operational defense and offer a guide for future usage.

INITIATIVE IN AIRLAND BATTLE

Initiative is fundamental to Airland Battle. As one of the four tenets, it is part of its theoretical bedrock and, better than any other single word, expresses the spirit that animates the entire AirLand Battle concept. The centrality of initiative is reflected in the May 1986 edition of FM 100-5 which states that Airland Battle doctrine is "based on securing or retaining the initiative and exercising it aggressively to accomplish the mission."[7] Nevertheless, FM 100-5 is inconsistent in its use of the term. Such inconsistency undermines the theoretical foundations of the doctrine and raises practical questions about application of initiative in the defense.

Initiative Defined

FM 100-5 defines the tenet of initiative as "setting or changing the terms of battle by action" and indicates that "initiative implies an offensive spirit in the conduct of all operations."[8] It specifically recognizes two kinds of initiative:

> Applied to the force as a whole, initiative requires a constant effort to force the enemy to conform to our operational purpose and tempo while retaining our own freedom of action. Applied to individual soldiers and leaders, it requires a willingness and ability to act independently within the framework of the higher commanders intent.[9]

For sake of discussion, I'll refer to the latter as individual initiative and the former simply as initiative. Individual initiative with its connotations of Auftragstaktik is not within the scope of this paper. The remainder of the monograph will deal with the other type of initiative which is a characteristic of military operations.

This type of initiative is closely related to agility as described in the following passage:

> Agility--the ability of friendly forces to act faster than the enemy--is the first prerequisite for seizing and holding the initiative. Such greater quickness permits the rapid concentration of friendly strength against enemy vulnerabilites. This must be done repeatedly so that by the time the enemy reacts to one action, another has already taken place, disrupting his plans and leading to late, uncoordinated, and piecemeal enemy responses. It is this process . . . which enables smaller forces to disorient, fragment, and eventually defeat much larger opposing formations.[10]

Based on these excerpts, the tenet of initiative can be described as setting or changing of the terms of battle by action to force the

enemy to conform to our operational purpose and tempo. Freedom of action is a necessary precondition for the exercise of initiative. Superior agility is one of the key variables which enables a smaller force to set the tempo of battle leading to the eventual disorientation and defeat of a larger opponent.

In this context, initiative can be exercised in the conduct of all operations. The manual appears to confirm this inference when discussing operational planning and execution:

> . . . whether attacking or defending, success depends on securing the initiative as early as possible and exercising it aggressively. It requires that every weapon, asset, and combat multiplier be used to gain that initiative, to throw the enemy off balance with a powerful blow from an unexpected direction, and to follow up rapidly to prevent his recovery.[11]

A similar concept of initiative in the defense is evident in the chapter on doctrinal fundamentals. In the defense, "initiative implies quickly turning the tables on the attacker" to negate his initial advantage of choosing the time and place of attack.[12]

The Terms of Battle

Unfortunately, the concept of initiative as setting the terms of battle by action is largely absent from the body of FM 100-5 which deals with the details of offensive and defensive operations. In fact, "the terms of battle" are never defined. Based on the comment that, "In exercising the initiative, the attacker initially decides where and when combat will take place", it can be assumed that the time and place of the attack are terms of battle.[13] The initial discussion of initiative as a tenet refers to forcing the enemy to conform to our tempo leading to the supposition that tempo is also a term of battle.

The manual contains only three other allusions to "terms of battle" with which to clarify the concept. A discussion of campaign planning mentions that, "Operational level commanders try to set favorable terms for battle by synchronized, ground, air, and sea maneuver and by striking the enemy throughout the theater of operations.[14] In the defense, the operational commander may opt to "defer concentration for decisive battle until favorable terms of combat can be obtained."[15] A description of the Principle of the Offensive states that the offensive "permits . . . the military commander to capitalize on the initiative,

impose his will on the enemy, set the terms and select the place of confrontation or battle.[16] The first quote indicates that both fire and maneuver are used to set the terms of battle. The second seems to imply that the ratio of forces is a term of battle. The third passage is puzzling in that it lists capitalizing on the initiative, setting the terms of battle and imposing our will on the enemy as capabilities of the offensive. If the manual's initial definition of initiative is accepted, this is redundant since initiative is setting the terms of battle to impose our will on the enemy.

A Competing Concept of Initiative

Not only are direct references to setting the terms of battle largely absent from the bulk of the manual, the entire concept of initiative takes on a different meaning. In most of the manual, the term "initiative" is seldom used alone as it was in the description of the tenet where the text stated that, "initiative requires a constant effort to force the enemy to conform to our operational purpose and tempo."[17] Instead, it employs the phrase "the initiative" as in "seizing the initiative" or "taking the initiative." In such cases, "the initiative" is nearly synonymous with offensive action. The dictionary defines initiative as "an introductory act or step; [a] leading action."[18] The predominant usage in FM 100-5 is in line with this meaning. In this context, initiative is an attribute of offensive action since the attacker takes the leading action and initiates the engagement, battle or campaign. This usage will become abundantly clear in the following description of the AirLand Battle defensive concept. In addition to supporting the thesis that FM 100-5 is inconsistent in its use of the term "initiative", this discussion will also reveal how AirLand Battle doctrine proposes to avoid the excessively reactive character of its predecessor, the so-called "Active Defense."

Avoiding Passivity in the Defense

An effective defense must never be passive. In AirLand Battle, it should consist of "reactive and offensive elements working together to deprive the enemy of the initiative."[19] Although the defender resists and contains the enemy employing reactive measures where necessary, he must seek every opportunity to take offensive action. When the attacker

exposes himself, the defender counterattacks to destroy the coherence of the enemy's operations. Although such opportunities will be limited and local early in the campaign, they will become more numerous as the situation develops. "Whatever its larger purpose, the immediate challenge of any defensive operation is to recapture the initiative and thus create the opportunity to shift to the offensive."[20] Eventually such actions allow the entire defending force to transition to the offense.

The Fundamental Characteristics of the Defense

In discussing the fundamentals of defense, FM 100-5 points out that any defensive plan must have four fundamental characteristics: preparation, disruption, concentration, and flexibility. Each of these is closely tied to seizing the initiative which is equated with taking offensive action within the overall framework of the defense.

The defender arrives in the battle area before the attacker and must maximize the advantages of preparation. At the operational level this involves organizing forces in depth, assembling and positioning reserves, coordinating plans and conducting reconnaissance and deception. Major emphasis is placed on preparing counterattack plans to exploit opportunities for "the defender to take the initiative."[21] The manual admonishes the defender to plan for these opportunities "with preconceived maneuver and fire plans by designating counterattack forces and making counterattack plans to support his defense and for eventual reversion of his whole force to the offense."[22]

Disruption is described as the process of countering the attacker's initiative. To prevent him from concentrating overwhelming combat power, "the defender must disrupt the synchronization of the enemy's operation."[23] The defender in turn must concentrate. Although combat power must be distributed to avoid defeat throughout the battle area, the defender must concentrate to obtain local advantage at decisive points. Operational commanders may attempt to bring a quick decision by committing their reserves early or "defer concentration for decisive battle until favorable terms of combat can be obtained."[24]

Defensive operations require flexible planning and execution. The defender must be agile enough to counter or evade the attacker's blow

and then strike back effectively. "Retention of operational reserves is indispensable to flexibility at the operational level."[25] The defensive campaign plan should allow maximum possible freedom of action. "It should preserve balance by disposing forces so that the commander can respond to crisis and pass quickly to the attack whenever the opportunity arises."[26] Reserves will be committed throughout the defense and will have to be reconstituted continually. "Reserves give the commander the means to seize the initiative and preserve his flexibility."[27]

The Transition to the Offense

All defensive campaigns have these four fundamental characteristics and "mix offensive with defensive tactical actions and contest the initiative in the theater at every opportunity."[28] Offensive actions to exploit fleeting opportunities must be considered carefully, but the commander must accept calculated risks in order to avoid becoming excessively passive. The full advantage of awaiting the attack is realized once the enemy has committed his forces. "The defender's chief advantage then becomes his ability to seize the initiative and to counterattack over familiar ground protected by his own defensive positions."[29] The net result is that as the defensive battle progresses, the defender will "seize the tactical initiative locally and then generally as the entire force shifts from defense to offense."[30]

Defensive Patterns

Having established the conceptual underpinning for the defense, the manual goes on to discuss "alternative defensive patterns. It recognizes that traditional usage divides defenses into two broad categories: the mobile and the area defense. However, these are really the polar cases in a continuum of defensive techniques. It is also important to note that neither the area nor mobile defense is passive. Both employ dynamic as well as static elements.

In a mobile defense relatively small forces are deployed forward to form the static elements that canalize and attrit the enemy force and limit the depth of its penetration while securing the ground from which to launch the counterattack. These static elements are complemented by a large mobile reserve which is used to conduct "the decisive

counterattack." Forming such a large reserve will require thinning committed forces, therefore, "a mobile defense cannot be conducted unless the temporary loss of some terrain is acceptable."[31]

In an area defense, the bulk of the defending forces retain ground using a combination of defensive positions and small reserves. Unlike mobile defenses where depth is essential, area defenses may be conducted at varying depths. "Where necessary, the commander may make his effort well forward, committing most of his combat power to the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) and planning to counterattack early, when the enemy forces are still along the FEBA or even beyond it."[32] Such a forward defense is more difficult and less flexible since it is dependent on rapid identification of and concentration against the enemy main effort. It also makes it difficult to defer a decision until the enemy's synchronization can be destroyed and an overall advantage obtained or after he has reached his culminating point.

Initiative Requires Anticipation

Regardless of the nature of the defense, the ability of the defender to anticipate likely enemy courses of action is vital to the seizure of the initiative. In the words of the manual, "anticipation and foresight are critical to turning inside the enemy's decision cycle and maintaining the initiative."[33] As a result, the campaign plan must contain a number of branches and sequels:

> "Branches" to the plan--options for changing dispositions, orientation, or direction of movement and accepting or declining battle--preserve the commander's freedom of action. Such provisions for flexibility anticipate the enemy's likely actions and give the commander a means of dealing with them quickly. Expressed as contingency plans, such branches from the plan can be of decisive importance since they shorten the friendly decision cycle and may allow the large unit commander to act faster than his opponent. Actions after battle or sequels are also an important means of anticipating the course of action and accelerating the decision cycle.[34]

The importance of anticipation to both initiative and agility was recognized by the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 which added a new AirLand Battle imperative: "Anticipate Events on the Battlefield."[35]

Offensive Action within the Defense"

What emerges from this discussion is a clear emphasis on offensive action throughout the conduct of the defense. Such actions are to be local and opportunistic at first. Eventually, the cumulative impact of

numerous tactical counterattacks will allow a transition to the overall offensive. Throughout the discussion, the initiative is equated with offensive action. Nowhere is this more explicit than in the Appendix on the Principles of War. The discussion of each principle is preceded by a one line capsule summary. In the case of the principal of the "Offensive" it is "Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative."[26] The detailed discussion states, in part, that:

> The principle of the offensive suggests that offensive action, or maintenance of the initiative, is the most effective and decisive way to pursue and to attain a clearly defined, common goal. . . . An offensive spirit must be inherent in the conduct of all defensive operations. . . . This is so because offensive action . . . is the means by which the nation or a military force captures and holds the initiative, maintains freedom of action and achieves results. It permits . . . the military commander to capitalize on the initiative, impose his will on the enemy, set the terms and select the place of confrontation or battle, exploit vulnerabilities and react to rapidly changing situations and unexpected developments. No matter what the level, the side that retains the initiative through offensive action forces the foe to react rather than to act.[27]

Reconciling the Concepts of Initiative

If the thesis that FM 100-5 is inconsistent in its use of the term "initiative" is correct, it must be demonstrated that the manual not only uses initiative in two different contexts but that these are incompatible or contradictory. It has been established that FM 100-5 defines initiative as "setting or changing the terms of battle by action" to force the enemy to conform to our operational purpose and tempo.[28] Nevertheless, the majority of the manual treats initiative solely as an attribute of offensive action. Of course, offensive action can be taken within the context of an overall defense. When discussing the delay, the manual catalogs some of the possibilities:

> Commanders conducting a delay should take the initiative whenever possible. . . . Contesting the initiative also helps the delaying force avoid a pattern of passivity that favors the attacker. Ambushes, counterattacks, spoiling attacks, CAS [Close Air Support] and BAI [Battlefield Air Interdiction] are all means of striking the attacker.[29]

Thus, the basic question can be framed. Is setting the terms of battle equivalent to taking offensive action? It is arguable that the attacker is setting at least some of the terms of battle (the time and place of the attack according to the manual). This proposition is supported by the definition of the Principle of the Offensive. It includes all of the elements of the tenant of initiative as

characteristics of the offense: setting the terms of battle, imposing your will on the enemy, retaining freedom of action and forcing the enemy to react. However, for the two usages to be fully compatible, the converse must also be true: that setting the terms of battle is the exclusive function of the attacker. On this point, the logic breaks down.

One obstacle to rigorously pursuing this line of argument is that the manual doesn't specifically identify the terms of battle. But building on the previous discussion of this subject, it can be surmised that they include at least time, place, forces and tempo. If nothing else, the defender can actively influence the forces engaged. While a passive defender can have sections of his force isolated and destroyed piecemeal, one following Airland Battle doctrine will anticipate the enemy action and use maneuver successively to concentrate to defeat the enemy's attacks and exploit his vulnerabilities. The defender also affects the time and place of the battle by his decision to accept or refuse battle. Once engaged, the tempo of the battle will be significantly effected by the tenacity and skill of the defender and the type of defense (area or mobile) employed. If he chooses to conduct a delay, the tempo might be very high but still not decisively favor the attacker. Finally, the defender's employment of deception could affect all of the terms of battle.

Implications

Aside from the definitional dilemma already described, FM 100-5's use of initiative as an attribute of the offensive has serious practical consequences for the defense, especially at the operational level. First, the manual overemphasizes the use of offensive action in the defense. This is the natural consequence of having a doctrine which calls for seizing and retaining the initiative and, at the same time, limits its concept of initiative in the defense to the counterattack. This problem was acknowledged in a recent article by the TRADOC Commander, General Richardson:

> Some critics of the 1982 edition [of FM 100-5] argued that the AirLand Battle overemphasized the offense. . . . Actually, the 1982 version underscored "initiative", "momentum in the attack", "violent execution", and "surprise and shock effect", all characteristics of - and vital to - an offensive spirit. When

> taken out of context, this aggressive terminology appeared to oversell offensive action.[40]

A similar point was made in the memorandum by Colonel Was de Czege which outlined some of the changes incorporated in the revision of the 1982 manual. Commenting on the "common misinterpretation" that AirLand Battle was a swing to "extreme offensive mindedness", he wrote that:

> The text in this edition is more carefully articulated to avoid over exaggeration of the advantages of the offense. With the expansion of operational level discussions, it is also more clear how offensive actions fit into defensive major operations and campaigns.[41]

While the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 is undoubtedly a more carefully crafted and balanced presentation of AirLand Battle, the continuing problem with the use of the term "initiative" remains to bedevil those concerned about overemphasizing offensive action. GENERAL Richardson's comment that the manual was "actually" underscoring initiative and the offensive spirit misses the point that the relevant sections of the manual equate initiative with offensive action. This is a serious problem for those attempting to implement the doctrine. By equating initiative in the defense with the counterattack, the doctrine could lead to premature and potentially wasteful counterattacks by those seeking to "seize the initiative." This is not to paint the authors of FM 100-5 as latter-day Grandmaisons, but merely to raise the point that the doctrine's narrow view of initiative offers little practical guidance to the perspective defender except to counterattack at every opportunity. While this may be good advice if "opportunities" are correctly evaluated, the doctrine must provide some middle ground between counterattacking and being doomed to passivity and defeat.

The other problem is that the manual unnecessarily circumscribes the exercise of initiative in the operational level defense. It concedes the operational initiative to the attacker. For example, it states that a theater commander conducting a defense "will not hold the initiative early in the campaign"[42] The reader is told over and again that seizing the operational initiative is a cumulative process in which, "tactical successes in seizing the initiative are used as leverage to seize the initiative at the operational level."[43] This view seems to foreclose any possibility of exercising operational initiative until a series of

tactical successes allow an operational counteroffensive. This leads to the conclusion that initiative is an all or nothing proposition. At any given level, you either have it or you don't. This concept is not easily reconciled with a view of warfare as a battle of wills between two independent dynamic powers.

This problem can be illustrated by examining initiative in terms of means, ways and ends. The four tenets of AirLand Battle provide general guidelines for the conduct of operations. In other words, they deal with the ways of fighting. However, in describing the mechanism with which the operational defender seizes the initiative, the manual appears to be portraying it as an end, the military condition to be achieved as the result of a series of coordinated tactical actions. Consequently, this view of initiative as a condition to be achieved is incompatible with its use as a tenet of AirLand Battle.

Resolving the Problem

As a result of this examination of AirLand Battle doctrine, it can be concluded that FM 100-5 actually contains three distinct concepts of initiative. First, there is individual initiative. Second, there is the attribute which accrues to the attacker by virtue of initiating the combat. Finally, there is the tenet of AirLand Battle which "requires a constant effort to force the enemy to conform to our operational purpose and tempo" by setting the terms of battle.[44] References to individual initiative can be readily identified from their context. The use of "initiative" in statements such as, "If subordinates are to exercise initiative without endangering the overall success of the force, they must thoroughly understand the commander's intent" is unlikely to cause undue confusion.[45] The same is not true of the other two concepts which define initiative as a characteristic of military operations.

There are two possible solutions to the problem of mixed usage in FM 100-5. First, if there is a "correct" definition of initiative based on widely accepted military usage, it should be adopted. Alternatively, if multiple connotations of "initiative" are common in military theory, there should be some way to differentiate between them. To resolve this issue, we will now turn to a brief survey of the use of the term "initiative" in military theory. Along the way, we also examine what

these same theorists have to say about applying an offensive spirit to the conduct of the defense.

INITIATIVE IN MILITARY THEORY

Clausewitz on Initiative

In his seminal work, On War, Clausewitz devoted considerable effort to defining the attack and the defense and exploring their interrelationship. In his view, these two forms of combat constitute "a logical antithesis, each complementary to the other."[46] In his analysis, waiting is the fundamental characteristic of the defense. Thus he begins his "book" on the defense with the statement that:

> "What is the defense? The parrying of a blow. What is its characteristic feature? Awaiting the blow. It is this feature that turns any action into a defensive one; it is the only test by which defense can be distinguished from attack in war."[47]

Clausewitz examined the defense at what he characterized as the tactical and strategic levels. However, his strategic level dealt with campaigns in a theater of operations and more nearly corresponds to the current notion of the operational level of war. At both levels, the attacker was identified as the party who initiated the conflict by entering the territory or position of the defender.

Although waiting is characteristic of the defense, Clausewitz is quick to add that the defense cannot be entirely passive. "Therefore, defense in war can only be relative, and the characteristic of waiting should be applied only to the basic concept, not to all its components."[48] Thus, defense is composed of both waiting and acting. However, in Clausewitz's view, it is the original act of waiting that establishes the character of all follow-on actions. This perspective is reflected in the following discussion of types of resistance:

> The defender of a theater of war awaits the attack on the theater . . . once the enemy has attacked, any active and therefore more or less offensive move made by the defender does not invalidate the concept of defense, for its salient feature and chief advantage, waiting, has been established.[49]

Consequently, a defensive campaign can be fought with offensive battles and "the defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield of well directed blows."[50]

This concept of offensive action within a overall defensive context also extends to gaining sufficient advantage to turn the tables on the attacker. As Clausewitz states it:

> "If defense is the stronger form of war, yet has a negative object, it follows that it should be used only as long as weakness compels, and be abandoned as soon as we are strong enough to pursue a positive object. When one has used defensive measures successfully, a more favorable balance of strength is usually created; thus the natural course in war is to begin defensively and end by attacking"[51]

In line with this thought, Clausewitz believed that, "Transition to the counterattack must be accepted as a tendency inherent in defense-indeed, as one of its essential features."[52] Furthermore, he argued that the idea of ultimate transition to a counteroffensive must be in the commander's mind from the start and be an intergal part of his overall defensive plan. It is in this context that Clausewitz's made his now famous statement that: "A sudden powerful transition to the offensive-the flashing sword of vengeance-is the greatest moment for the defense."[53]

The implications for our understanding of the operational defense are clear. Offensive action is an integral part of the defense once the character of the defense is established by an initial period of waiting. At the operational-level, once our theater of operations has been invaded, all subsequent actions are considered part of the operational defensive until the enemy is expelled from the theater or a new campaign begins.

In his discussion of the defense, Clausewitz frequently uses the term, "initiative". Although he never specifically defines initiative, his meaning can be inferred since his usage is both straightforward and consistent. By initiative, he means taking the first step. Thus one side "initiates" combat by charging in an engagement or invading a theater in a campaign. As a result, in his usage, the initiative belongs to the attacker by definition. This meaning is clear in his statement that:

> "Tactically, every engagement, large or small, is defensive if we leave the initiative to our opponent and await his appearance before our lines. From that moment on we can employ all offensive means without losing the advantages of the defensive-that is to say the advantages of waiting and the advantages of position. At the strategic level the campaign replaces the engagement and the theater of operations takes the place of the position."[54]

The initiative as an attribute of the attacker is even more explicitly stated in this quote: "Because of the greater areas involved in strategy, envelopment or concentric attack will of course only be

possible for the side which takes the initiative - in other words, the attacker."[55] Thus, Clausewitz's concept of initiative is a natural extension of his definitions of attack and defense. Since waiting is the essence of the defense, its opposite - initiative or taking the first action - is the essence of the offense. At Clausewitz's strategic level, the act of taking the initiative and invading the enemy's theater establishes the identity of the attacker for the remainder of the campaign.

Jomini on Initiative

In the Art of War, Jomini defines initiative as a category of offensive action. Having recognized three distinct levels of war, he coined a specific term to designate the offensive at each level. At the tactical level, this term was "taking the initiative."

> There are several phases of the offensive :if against a great state . . . it is an invasion; if a province only, or a line of defense of moderate extent, be assailed, it is the ordinary offensive; finally, if the offensive is but an attack upon the enemy's position , and is confined to a single operation, it is called the [sic] taking the initiative.[56]

Based on this introductory passage "taking the initiative" is synonymous with the tactical offensive. However, Jomini (or his translator) does not consistently apply this terminology and often uses the phase "taking the initiative" to mean any offensive action. Thus he writes: "For a single operation, which we have called the [sic] taking the initiative, the offensive is almost always advantageous, particularly in strategy."[57]

Like most theorists, Jomini recognized the need for avoiding passivity in defense:

> A defensive war is not without its advantages when wisely conducted. It may be passive or active, taking the offensive at times. The passive defense is always pernicious, the active may accomplish great successes.[58]

He also addressed the concept of the diminishing force of the attack and the need for the defender to be alert to seize opportunities for offensive action. He calls this a defensive-offensive and strongly recommends it:

> It combines the advantages of both systems; for one . . . surrounded by the advantages of being on his own ground, can with

> hope of success take the initiative, and is fully able to judge when and where to strike.[59]

Later in his detailed treatment of the defense, he again makes this point: "The best thing for an army standing on the defensive is to know how to take the offensive at a proper time, and to take it."[60]

From these illustrations, it is apparent that in Jominian usage "the initiative" is a synonym for the attack. Jomini strongly supported taking offensive action within the context of the defense and recommended transitioning to the overall offensive once the balance of forces tipped in favor of the defender. Thus, the use of terms such as "seizing or taking the initiative" when referring to launching a counterattack would be in keeping with Jomini's usage.

Liddel Hart on the Defense

Although Liddell Hart is best known as one of the pioneers of mechanized warfare and the father of the strategy of the indirect approach, he was also a strong proponent of the superiority of the defense. His writings on the defense are particularly germane since he takes pains to discuss the proper role of the offensive action within the overall defensive framework. Unfortunately, the term "initiative" does not figure prominently in his theoretical constructs. However, his meaning can be inferred from its occasional use.

Liddell Hart uses "initiative" to mean being proactive, i.e. causing the enemy to react to your moves. This is closely related to the concept of dislocation which is the key to the strategy of the indirect approach. In the indirect approach, the object is to diminish the enemy's ability to resist by exploiting the elements of movement in the physical sphere and surprise in the psychological sphere. Dislocation is produced in both spheres when your actions present the enemy with a situation that upsets his dispositions and compels an unexpected change. The sudden realization on the part of the enemy commander that he is at a disadvantage produces a fear of being trapped. The relation of this concept and initiative is pointed out in this passage:

> To be practical, any plan must take into account the enemy's power to frustrate it; the best chance is to have a plan that can easily

> be varied to fit the circumstances met; to keep such adaptability, while still keeping the initiative, the best way is to operate along a line which offers alternative objectives.[61]

Liddell Hart arrived at his conclusions concerning the superiority of the defense in the 1930s and his assessment was largely based on his observation that, "technological innovation was rendering the defensive ever stronger in comparison with the attack."[62] This led him to dispute the popular notion that advancing mechanized divisions would be able to pierce conventional defenses early in a war. He held that the same technology would disproportionately favor the defense resulting in its superiority except where the defending army was surprised, greatly outnumbered or unmechanized. "Despite the advantage that mechanization has brought to the offensive, its reinforcement of the defensive may prove greater still."[63] Liddel Hart eventually expanded this view in a series of articles and books designed to demonstrate the rather sweeping generalization that the aggressor is seldom successful:

> Analysis show that in the majority of battles which are engraved in the pages of history, the loser was the army which was the first to commit itself to the attack. . . . History offers, to those who will inquire of it objectively, overwhelming evidence that the counter-offensive, after the enemy has overstrained himself in the offensive, has been the most decisive form of action.[64]

With this background, it is possible to proceed to a discussion of Liddel Hart's recommendations for the conduct of defense. His ideas on this subject are most clearly stated in the book Dynamic Defense which was published after the fall of France and in which he sought to "clarify his earlier writings" on the superiority of the defense. In his critique of the war in France, he opined that the Germans used the indirect approach to attack weak areas and then used defensive tactics while the French exhausted themselves in fruitless, piecemeal counterattacks with their limited mechanized forces. He also pointed out the French were unable to adjust to the "tempo of mechanized warfare" which resulted in their dislocation and inability to react to German initiatives.

Liddel Hart's answer to the Blitzkrieg was a defense combining static and dynamic elements. Traditional static positions reinforced with large numbers of anti-tank guns and mines would canalize and slow

the enemy advance in "contracting funnels" of fire. The defender's own mechanized forces would then be launched in decisive counterstroke to regain the initiative.

> While it is axiomatic that the attacker enjoys the initiative, it may not carry him far save where he is met by a slow moving force. The advantage is likely to be short lived if the defender disposes of adequate mechanized forces. The advance of the attacker's armoured units through the defenses, if these are in depth, is likely to be slower than the bringing up of the defender's armoured units along unobtrusive roads, or across country. On arrival these can strike the attacker's armoured force at a moment when it is likely to be somewhat disorganized by its fighting advance.[65]

This passage also reveals that, in his opinion, it is axiomatic that the attacker has the initiative, i.e. is being proactive. However, the remainder of the discussion demonstrates that he believed that it was possible to take the tactical or operational initiative within a larger defensive context.

He also makes a careful distinction between a "counterattack" and a "counterstroke." For him a counterattack is a wasteful attempt "indiscriminately to regain any position which the enemy has captured."[66] Such attacks are condemned as the "surest way to exhaust the resisting power of an army."[67] There is much more promise in a counterstroke which "catches the advancing enemy while in movement, or better still, when he has failed to gain an objective - and is thus depressed as well as disordered."[68] Such counterstrokes would be carried out by mobile armored forces backed by all available reserves and exploited to the fullest.

As a consequence of his belief in the superiority of the defense and his political convictions, Liddell Hart does not recommend that the "offensive-defensive" ultimately lead to a transition to the strategic offensive. As he explains:

> It's aim is to convince the enemy that he has nothing to gain and much to lose by pursuing a war. Its guiding principle is to eschew the vain pursuit of a decision by the offensive on our own part. Its method is not merely to parry, but to make the enemy pay as heavily as possible for, his offensive efforts. This implies in the military sphere an active and mobile defense, in which direct resistance is extended by ripostes both strategic and tactical as well as by continual harassing action.[69]

Thus for Liddel Hart, "initiative" is equated with the ability to force to enemy to react and change his plan to conform to our actions. Although, he believed it was "axiomatic" that the attacker had the

initiative at the start of an operation, he argued that the defender could quickly turn the tables and seize the initiative. This would be accomplished with a combination of "direct resistance" to slow, attrit and disorganize the attacker, and "ripostes" to complete the process of dislocation. These ripostes should take the form of "counterstrokes" by massed mobile reserves to exploit vulnerabilities uncovered during the enemy's advance.

Mao Tse Tung on Initiative

Initiative is fundamental to Mao Tse Tung's concept of protracted warfare. It occupies a central position in his analytical framework and forms the bridge that establishes the relationships between other relevant concepts such as superiority, flexibility, planning, uncertainty and the offensive. He defines initiative as "freedom of action" and its importance is indicated in the following passage:

> In any war, the opponents contend for the initiative, whether on a battlefield, in a battle area, in a war zone or in the whole war, for initiative means freedom of action for an army. Any army losing the initiative, is forced into a passive position and ceases to have freedom of action, faces danger of defeat or extermination. Naturally, gaining the initiative is harder in strategic defense and interior-line operations and easier in offensive exterior-line operations.[70]

This excerpt also reveals that initiative is not an exclusive attribute of the offensive.

In Mao's view initiative is inseparable from superiority in the ability to wage war. "Such superiority ... is the objective basis of initiative."[71] He portrays a close association of initiative with the offense but recognizes that all things are relative and that there are degrees of initiative. Thus he reasons that to "have initiative always and everywhere, that is, to have absolute initiative, is possible only when there is absolute superiority matched against absolute inferiority."[72]

Like most theorists, Mao cautions against passivity in the defense. "It is possible and necessary to use tactical offensives within the strategic defensive, to fight campaigns and battles of quick decision within a strategically protracted war."[73] Offensive actions and battles of quick decision with a protracted, strategic defense are achieved

through local concentration. Eventually, the cumulative effect of local successes will allow transition to the overall offensive:

> Any passivity, however, is a disadvantage, and one must strive hard to shake it off. Militarily, the way to do so is to resolutely wage, quick-decision offensive warfare on exterior lines, to launch guerilla warfare in the rear of the enemy and so secure overwhelming local superiority and initiative in many campaigns of mobile and guerrilla warfare. Through such local superiority and local initiative in many campaigns, we can gradually create strategic superiority and strategic initiative.[74]

Although superiority is the objective basis of initiative, subjective planning is required to realize its potential due to the role of uncertainty in warfare. "Viewed from this angle, war is a contest in subjective ability between the commanders of opposing armies in their struggle for superiority and for the initiative on the basis of material conditions."[75] Furthermore, Mao asserts that through superior planning and capitalizing on the mistakes of the enemy, the inferior side can seize the initiative.

> Thus it can be seen that although superiority or inferiority in the capacity to wage war is the objective basis determining initiative or passivity, it is not in itself actual initiative or passivity; it is only through a struggle, a contest of ability that actual initiative or passivity can emerge. In the struggle, correct subjective direction can transform inferiority into superiority and passivity into initiative.[76]

Given the importance of uncertainty, it is logical that a commander should try to increase the uncertainty of his opponent. As a result, Mao emphasizes the value of surprise and deception. "Hence deliberately creating misconceptions for the enemy and then springing surprise attacks upon him are two ways . . . of achieving superiority and seizing the initiative.[77]

Having established that superiority is the objective basis of initiative and that planning is its subjective basis, Mao asserts that flexibility is the "concrete realization of the initiative in military operations."[78]

> Flexibility in dispersal, concentration and shifts in position is a concrete expression of the initiative in guerrilla warfare, whereas rigidity and inertia inevitably lead to passivity and cause unnecessary losses.[79]

Flexibility is the commander's "ability to take timely and appropriate measures on the basis of the objective conditions."[80]

Despite Mao's belief that initiative can be exercised in the defense, he also believes that the goal of all operations must be ultimately to transition to the offense.

> "The offensive is the only means of destroying the enemy and is also the principal means of self-preservation, while pure defense and retreat can play only a temporary and partial role in self-preservation and are quite useless for destroying the enemy."[81]

In the end, "the initiative can be decisively grasped only after victory in an offense."[82]

In constructing his analytic framework for protracted war, Mao presents the most elegant and comprehensive treatment of initiative that I have found anywhere in military theory. Like Clausewitz, he is one of the few theorists who is rigorous enough to define his terms and establish their interrelationships. He defines initiative as freedom of action and states that its objective basis is superiority in the capacity to wage war. However, since war is a struggle, correct subjective planning is needed to convert superiority in means into initiative. The concrete expression of initiative is flexibility.

Initiative in Maneuver Warfare

The theory of "maneuver warfare" grew out of the debate over the Active Defense in the late 70s. During this time, numerous critics were calling for a new doctrine which would place greater emphasis on maneuver and offensive action. Within the Army, this movement contributed to the formulation of AirLand Battle. On the civilian side, the ideas championed by two prominent critics, William Lind and Edward Luttwak, evolved into a theory characterized as "maneuver warfare." Since both maneuver warfare and AirLand Battle are products of the same doctrinal debate, they bear a number of similarities. However, the differences are sufficient to warrant consideration of what some consider a competing school of thought.

Both Lind and Luttwak assert that there are two basic "styles" of war: firepower/attrition and relational maneuver. Firepower/attrition warfare concentrates on the sequential physical destruction of the enemy through the direct application of firepower. According to both Lind and Luttwak this is the traditional American style of warfare and the Active

Defense, with its emphasis on "servicing targets", was viewed as a typical firepower/attrition doctrine. In relational maneuver, on the other hand, firepower is used to create opportunities for maneuver. Its basic aim is disruption or dislocation. As Lind puts it: "the goal is the destruction of the enemy's vital cohesion - disruption - not piece-by-piece physical destruction."[43]

Another major tenet is that maneuver warfare seeks to attack enemy weakness with friendly strength. To Luttwak, this is its central concept:

> Manoeuvre describes "relational action" - that is, action guided by a close study of the enemy and his way of doing things - where the purpose is to muster some localized or specialized strength against the identified points of weakness of an enemy.[44]

The third characteristic of maneuver warfare is superior agility: the ability to consistently act more rapidly than the opponent. For Lind this lies at the heart of the concept. Lind describes this process in terms of Colonel John Boyd's theory of observation-orientation-decision-action (OODA) loops. Briefly this theory states that in any conflict situation each side goes through a series of OODA loops. If one side's OODA cycle is consistently faster, the opponent will find his responses to the other's action becoming increasing inappropriate and overcome by the tempo of events. As this time competitive OODA loop process continues, the enemy's responses and the real situation become increasingly divergent until he suddenly realizes that there is nothing he can do to control the situation or turn it to his advantage. "At this point he has lost."[45]

Unfortunately, the term "initiative" is seldom used by either Luttwak or Lind except as it applies to the individual initiative required by the decentralized command system they recommend for executing maneuver warfare. However, John Boyd, whose OODA loop theory inspired Lind's ideas on maneuver warfare, uses "initiative" as a characteristic of combat action. In his usage, gaining the initiative is the result of being able to cycle through the OODA loop faster than the enemy. Having the initiative forces the enemy to react to your actions. This is apparent in his description of the pattern for successful operations:

> Observe-orient-decide-act more inconspicuously, more quickly, and with more irregularity as basis to keep or gain initiative as well as to shape and shift main effort to repeatedly and unexpectedly generate vulnerabilities and weaknesses exposed by that effort or other efforts that tie up, divert or drain away adversary attention (and strength) elsewhere.[46]

It is also apparent from this quote that turning inside the enemy's decision cycle involves more than speed alone. It is necessary to slow the enemy's decision cycle by preventing him from anticipating your actions. This requires using a variety of tactics and avoiding patterns of activity. He also recommends deception and operations security to deny the enemy accurate information upon which to base his decisions. Finally, he recognizes the need to "harmonize" the actions of the friendly force. The idea of gaining the initiative by complicating the enemy's decision cycle is also evident in the following excerpt:

> Seize the initiative at the outset by attacking the enemy with an evershifting kaleidoscope of moves and diversion in order to upset his actions and unsettle his plans thereby psychologically unbalance him and keep the initiative throughout.[47]

Beyond the common themes already covered, Luttwak and Lind emphasize different aspects of the same historical phenomenon they describe as maneuver warfare. Luttwak's principal emphasis is on exploiting enemy weakness through superior agility. This leads him to place greater stress on intelligence and risk. He sees maneuver warfare as a "knowledge-dependent" system that requires precise intelligence to avoid enemy strengths and exploit a known physical or psychological weakness. However, in this very method lies the seeds for catastrophic failure:

> But if relational-maneuver methods offer the possibility of much higher payoffs than those in attrition they do so at a correspondingly higher risk of failure. . . . The vulnerability of relational-maneuver methods to catastrophic failure reflects their dependence on the precise application of effort against correctly identified points of weakness.[48]

Building upon the Blitzkrieg example, Luttwak identifies three general characteristics of relational-maneuver at the operational level. First, the main strength of the enemy is to be avoided as much as possible. Second, deception is of central importance at every phase. Early in the attack, this is manifested in the ability to concentrate against isolated weak points. As the action continues, it contributes to turning inside the enemy's decision cycle by complicating his ability to observe and orient on the threat. Finally, intangible

momentum dominates. The operation will succeed only if it has "momentum that exceeds the speed of the intelligence-decision-action cycle of the defending force."[89]

Even more than Luttwak, Lind's focus is on turning inside the enemy's decision cycle. As a result, much of his writing is concerned with tailoring command and control to achieve superior agility. He is a strong advocate of decentralized command and auftragstaktik to promote individual initiative and the use of the schwerpunkt to focus the effort. He also frequently makes the point that "all patterns, recipes and formulas are to be avoided" since unpredictability is the key to preventing the enemy from effectively reacting to your moves.[90]

Due to his emphasis on unpredicatability, Lind offers no overall framework for an operational defense. The following quotation typifies his attitude:

> Flank defense and elastic defenses, such as those employed by the Germans are techniques likely to be employed in maneuver warfare. But they are not formulas for maneuver warfare, since maneuver warfare replaces reliance on formulas with unpredictable selections of battlefield techniques.[91]

More recently in his Maneuver Warfare Handbook, he offers some interesting comments concerning counterattacks and reserve but still refuses to place these into any overall operational context.

According to Lind the counterattack is the most common tool for shattering the cohesion of an attacker. The counterattack should be launched after the enemy has irrevocably committed himself. With his momentum carrying him in a definite direction, he will have great difficulty in dealing with an unexpected threat from another. Lind also precribes three general characteristics for a successful counterattack:

> First, it must be strong . . . Second, the counterattack must achieve surprise by striking the advancing enemy at a weak point created by his own forward momentum. Last, and most critical, the success of the counterattack depends on timing. The commander must be able to sense that point when the enemy, exposed and tiring, is incapable of rapid response to an unexpected threat.[92]

In line with his comments that a counterattack must be strong, Lind advises maintaining a strong reserve since it is:

> the key to retaining the initiative and achieving victory. ... It also comprises the counterattack forces. Without a strong reserve, even the most promising opportunities will be wasted, for you will be unable to exploit them. Indeed a strong reserve offers such potential advantages that it should reflect a sort of

> inverse proportionality - the weaker the main force with respect to the enemy, the stronger the reserve.[93]

Luttwak is more forthcoming in his defensive prescriptions. His 1979 alternative to the active defense is essentially a mobile defense which relies on decisive counterattacks as its defeat mechanism. However, this concept is only developed in outline and he admits that it is "not a fully analyzed idea and it is of course at the extreme end of the risk/pay-off spectrum"[94]

> A maneuver alternative . . . might deploy highly agile strike forces which would side-step the oncoming thrust of Soviet armored columns, penetrate through the spaces between the columns, and then advance deeply enough into the enemy's rear that they could then turn to attack the 'soft' traffic of artillery, combat-support and service units, and supply columns following in the wake of the Soviet armour. . . . the infantry . . . would be placed in the path of the Soviet advance to form resilient and amorphous defense zones. The aim would be to slow down and embed the enemy armour spearheads rather than to destroy them in costly combat. . . . the operational goal . . . to dislocate the enemy's scheme of operations . . . Soviet commanders would be confronted by confused entanglements and sudden emergencies in their own vulnerable rear. . . Soviet armour spearheads would in some cases run out of supplies . . . above all, the stream of reinforcement echelons would be drawn away to confront the strike forces in the rear, instead of being fed into the penetrating advance to keep up its momentum.[95]

Nevertheless, later in the same article Luttwak recognizes that such a defense requires depth that is not available to NATO. Thus, "the politically-imposed theater strategy of Forward Defense precludes the adoption of the only operational methods that would offer some opportunity to prevail over a materially more powerful enemy."[96]

Thus, in the eclectic body of theory known as maneuver warfare, initiative is the ability to force the enemy to react to your actions. The initiative is gained by the side that has a consistently faster OODA loop. Because of his longer observation to action time, the enemy is unable to effectively counter his opponent's actions while his own plan is increasingly frustrated. As the process continues, the faster sides continues to gain the initiative until there is nothing his enemy can do to control the situation or turn it to his advantage. In this concept, initiative is not an all or nothing proposition. Initially both sides attempt to control the situation and exercise initiative. Eventually, the side with the superior OODA cycle gains the upper hand and is victorious.

TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE THEORY OF INITIATIVE

Having reviewed the writings of a number of prominent theorists, it is time to return to the basic questions posed in the introduction to this paper: What is initiative and how can it be applied to the defense at the operational level of war?

Three Recurring Themes

It would be convenient if our survey of military theory revealed a common consensus on the definition and application of initiative. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There is even a greater diversity of meanings for the term "initiative" among the theorists reviewed in this paper than there is in FM 100-5. Although no two theorists use exactly the same words to describe "initiative", they generally fall in one of three categories.

An Attribute of the Offensive

To the two Napoleonic era theorists, initiative is an attribute of the offensive. For Clausewitz this perspective is tied to his concept that waiting is the essence of the defense. Consequently, the essence of its antithesis, the attack, must be taking the first action and this is precisely what Clausewitz means by initiative. Jomini's usage, while eminently practical, lacks rigor. He initially uses initiative in a very narrow sense as part of a scheme to designate the offensive at each level of war with a specific term. In this context, "taking the initiative" corresponds to a tactical attack. However, later in the text, he falls into using "taking the initiative" as a synonym for any type of offensive action. Given Jomini's influence on the development of military thought in English speaking countries, it is not surprising that this usage is still common in both British and American military literature.

Freedom of Action

For Mao Tse Tung, initiative means freedom of action. Its objective basis is superiority in combat potential which must be guided by correct subjective planning to convert it into initiative. The concrete realization of initiative is flexibility - the ability to take

timely and appropriate measures in accordance with objective circumstances. A less scientific/Marxist view of initiative as freedom of action was held by German General Friedrich von Bernhardi. In his 1913 treatise, On War of Today, in which he attempted to update Clausewitz, Bernhardi stated that: "initiative" was "acting in compliance with the preponderance of one's own intentions, instead of submitting to those of the enemy."[97] This concept of initiative focuses on the friendly force's ability to act. It is interactive only in the sense that friendly action be in accordance with one's own intentions. As a result, initiative is not exclusively an attribute of the attacker and can be exercised simultaneously by both sides. This perspective is also reflected in Mao's view that absolute initiative is only theoretically possible. In accordance with this view, Bernhardi asserted that it is possible to exercise initiative "even after a defeat and in retreat."[98]

Imposing Your Will on the Enemy

A third perspective is shared by B.F. Liddel Hart and John Boyd. For them, initiative is the ability to force the enemy to react to your actions. In both of their theories, initiative and superior agility lead to the dislocation of the enemy when he is no longer able to effectively react to your initiatives and thus loses control of the situation. The iterative nature of this process is illustrated in Boyd's model of competing observation-orientation-decision-action cycles. This process forms the theoretical basis of maneuver warfare. A similar concept of initiative as imposing your will on the enemy is evident in a 1921 article by British Major R.C. Cherry. In it he defines initiative as "the power of making the adversary's movements conform to our own."[99]

To these theorists, initiative is a fully interactive process since it requires that friendly actions force the enemy to react and thus limit his freedom of action. Furthermore, initiative is not necessarily an attribute of the attacker alone. Although, the attacker has the advantage of making the first move, the remainder of the process is interactive with both sides influencing and being influenced by their opponent. In the Boyd model, the side with superior agility eventually

gains the preponderance of the initiative and forces his opponent into a nearly totally reactive posture. Ultimately, the enemy's reactions become disfunctional resulting in dislocation and defeat.

Relationships

Three concepts of initiative emerge from this brief survey of military theory:

- Initiative as an attribute of the attack.
- Initiative as exercising freedom of action.
- Initiative as forcing the enemy to conform to your will.

Although each of these concepts represents a distinct perspective, they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, in many situations there is considerable overlap. For instance, an attacker breaking through a defender's main battle area would be exercising initiative in all three senses. In the first case, the initiative is his by definition. In the second, the attacker must have exercised freedom of action in order to mass his forces on the selected axis to achieve the breakthrough. Finally, it is likely that the actions of the defender are largely in reaction to the attacker and that he has exhausted most, if not all, of his options. Thus he finds the situation being controlled by the attacker and his actions conforming to the attacker's will. At the beginning of an attack, the situation might be different. The attacker would still have the first type of initiative by virtue initiating the attack. Both sides would probably have some freedom of action and, therefore, could exercise the second type of initiative simultaneously. For instance, the defender might shift his reserves to prepare a counterattack or ambush or reinforce a threatened sector. The third concept is more stringent since the defender's actions must force the attacker to conform to his will to some degree. Such actions might consist of shaping the battlefield by withdrawing in one sector to create an assailable flank, launching a counterattack or, perhaps, conducting a demonstration adjacent to the axis of the attack to draw away enemy reserves.

From this discussion, some general relationships between the three concepts can be deduced. The first type of initiative is an exclusive attribute of the attack. The second type of initiative is freedom of

action and can be viewed as a precondition for taking action to impose your will on the enemy which is the third concept of initiative. Thus the second concept is subsumed by the third which is a fully interactive model. In many cases, the attacker will be exercising all three types.

The situation is much more complex in the defense. The defender can never exercise the first type of initiative. He can only seize the initiative by transitioning to the offense. At the operational level, this forecloses any hope of exercising initiative until a full counteroffensive can be mounted. FM 100-5 shares this perspective when it refers to successes in seizing the initiative through local tactical counterattacks being used as leverage to seize the initiative at the operational level. The second definition of initiative as freedom of action is the least restrictive concept and would include any action taken by the defender in accordance with his own intentions as an exercise of initiative. The third concept is more restrictive but still allows the defender to exercise initiative provided the action limits the attacker's freedom of action and in some measures imposes the will of the defender. In both of the latter two concepts, the defending operational commander can exercise initiative simultaneously with his opposite number. For instance, a counterattack by the operational reserve or operational deception would exercise freedom of action and force the enemy to react.

Contemporary Observations on AirLand Battle

A military doctrine is effective only to the extent that it is assimilated and applied by the force at large. One measure of the depth of understanding outside the doctrinal community is to compare the concepts appearing in military periodicals with the doctrinal publications themselves. Having discovered that there is no consensus on the meaning of initiative in military theory at large, it might be useful to examine contemporary comment on AirLand Battle to see what effect FM 100-5 had on the perception of initiative within the US Army.

The problem of inconsistent usage of initiative in the first AirLand Battle edition of FM 100-5 was recognized in a December 1982 article by Major James Dubik. In his opinion, the manual often equated "initiative" with "having the first move" rather than "setting the terms

of battle". He argued that, "It is this sort of definition which led military writers to conclude that the initiative is with the attacker and that the defender can only regain the initiative."[100] Given the importance afforded initiative as one of the four tenets of AirLand Battle, he concluded that, "Attributing initiative to the attacking commander merely by definition is inconsistent with the Army's operational concept."[101]

Although Major Dubik is the only author who specifically addressed the question of mixed usage, many others have commented on initiative in AirLand Battle doctrine. These articles are especially germane since many of them have a defensive focus. Most of the authors reviewed for this paper concede that the attacker initially has the initiative and the defender must "seize it" or "wrest it" from him. One exception is MAJ Dubik who argues that:

> If commanders are to plan and conduct all operations according to the Army's operational concept, then they should never yield the initiative merely because they take up a defensive posture. . . . The defender can retain the initiative throughout the defensive battle by exerting his will upon the enemy commander. That is, the defender arranges his forces, prepares his positions and established his defenses in such a way that the attacker's plan cannot be executed. Seen in this light, the counterattack is not the act by which the defender wrests the initiative from the attacker. The counterattack becomes the culmination of the will of the defender being imposed upon the attacker.[102]

Beyond accepting the premise that the attacker begins with the initiative, none of the authors accept the concept that initiative is an exclusive attribute of the attacker. As a result, the discussion is not limited strictly to concepts for counterattacks. A typical viewpoint was provided by Colonel William Hanne in 1983. Writing about the application of deep attack to the defense, he reflects the Boyd/Liddell Hart school of initiative as forcing the enemy to react:

> The deep attack is supposed to create situations whereby the enemy commander is forced to deviate from his plan and is confronted with changes that occur so rapidly that he unable to keep up with it. He would thus lose the initiative and arrive at the point chosen for the decisive collapsing blow.[103]

A similar line of thought is evident in the comments of Colonel Clyde Tate and Lieutenant Colonel L.D. Holder in a 1981 article that presaged the introduction of AirLand Battle. Their comments also indicate acceptance of the idea that both the attacker and defender can

exercise initiative. This quote is one of the first published descriptions of the tenet of initiative:

> Initiative is the attacker's greatest advantage. It must be seized from him temporarily whenever possible and finally wrested from him altogether. This requires more than mere reaction to his attack. The defender must counter the attacker's initiatives with his own and prevent him from dictating the pace of the battle throughout its course.[104]

Writing in 1983, Colonel Wallace Franz expressed a variation on the same theme and related initiative to freedom of action. He began his discussion by stressing the importance that the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 placed on initiative:

> The new FM 100-5 emphasizes the importance of the initiative which enables us to impose our will on the enemy - make him react to our enterprise. FM 100-5 states under "Initiative" that, "The underlying purpose of every encounter with the enemy is to seize or retain the independence [freedom] of action. . . . In war, force is used progressively to reduce the options of the enemy. . . . . Freedom of action is made possible through the ability to obtain and maintain the initiative. This can be done . . . [by causing] dispersion and rigidity in the enemy's dispositions, thus increasing his vulnerability and reducing his freedom of action.[105]

In this formulation, the reciprocal nature of initiative is emphasized. Freedom of action enables the exercise of initiative which causes the enemy to react. This in turn limits his options and decreases his freedom of action. The net result is then to limit his initiative.

Lieutenant Colonel John Cope writing in 1984 takes a slightly different approach to initiative and comes closer to the idea of setting the terms of battle:

> Having the initiative equates to being in control which is a prerequisite for success. . . . To retain control when defending, it is imperative that the attacker fight a battle that is not entirely of his making. The attacker picks the time, but the defender controls the place in accordance with his well concealed plan. . . . the defender must "shape" the local battlefield. . . . to force the enemy unwittingly to combat where and how the defender desires.[106]

In this case, shaping the battlefield forces the enemy to limit his options and, therefore, his initiative.

From this sample of commentary on AirLand Battle, it appears that many contemporary observers subscribe to the viewpoint that the tenant of "initiative" entails imposing our will on the enemy by forcing him to react to our actions. This roughly corresponds to FM 100-5's notion of setting or changing the terms of battle by action. As for the manual's

use of the term "initiative" as an attribute of the offensive, this appears accepted only to the extent that the attacker is assumed to have the initiative at the beginning of the battle. From that point onward, battle is viewed as dynamic, interactive contest of wills in which both sides exercise initiative and are affected by the other's initiatives. As the battle progresses, one side gains the upper hand, limits the other side's freedom of action and initiative and emerges victorious. This process can be conceptualized using John Boyd OODA loop model. None of the articles on AirLand Battle doctrine reviewed for this paper took Mao's less restrictive view of initiative as freedom of action.

CONCLUSION

Having analyzed FM 100-5 and the works of a number of prominent theorists and contemporary commentators, the final step is to generalize the results of these inquiries and come to some conclusions and recommendations. Proceeding from the general to the specific, this study has established that:

- In military terminology, initiative has two fundamentally different meanings. Depending on context, it is a characteristic of military operations or the personal quality of taking action in the absence of orders.

- There are three basic concepts of initiative as a characteristic of military operations:

  -- Initiative as an attribute of the attack.

  -- Initiative as imposing your will on the enemy by causing him to react to your actions.

  -- Initiative as freedom of action.

- The first two of these concepts appear in FM 100-5.

- The tenet of initiative is defined as setting the terms of battle by action which corresponds to the second concept.

- Nevertheless, the majority of the text treats initiative as an attribute of the offensive even though this is never specifically acknowledged.

- These two concepts are incompatible.

- The result is confusion, an incomplete exposition of one of the key tenets of AirLand Battle and an overemphasis on the counterattack as the only means of exercising initiative in the defense.

- This confusion is reflected in the commentary on AirLand Battle. While there is general understanding of the tenet of initiative as imposing your will on the enemy by setting the terms of battle, there is no consensus on how this translates into action on the battlefield. The most common themes are counterattacks, deep battle and vague references to turning inside the enemy's decision cycle. Furthermore, the effect of FM 100-5's mixed usage is evident in that most of the writers seemed

to agree that the attacker has the initiative at the outset and that the defender must wrest it away.

The question of the definition of "initiative" and its use in FM 100-5 is not merely of academic interest. For AirLand Battle doctrine to be viable, it must be clearly understood throughout the Army. Inconsistency in the basic doctrinal publication can only impede assimilation and understanding. Furthermore, doctrinal publications must not only explain the theory but also demonstrate how its tenants are applied. On the question of initiative on the defense, FM 100-5 fails this test. The casual reader is left with the impression that "initiative" in the defense means counterattack. Beyond the introductory chapters there are no direct references to shaping the defensive battle, controlling its tempo or dislocating the enemy's attack.

If the Army were only now setting out to write AirLand Battle doctrine, I would recommend that it use the term "initiative" in its most common meaning: the attribute the attacker gains by making the first move. It could then find some other term to convey the special meaning of setting the terms of battle. For instance, the Soviets use initiative as an attribute of the attacker but have developed the concept of "combat activeness" to mean imposing one's will on the enemy by forcing him to react to your operations.[107] However, it is too late to make a change of such magnitude. The four tenets of AirLand Battle are already firmly embedded in the Army's consciousness and now is not the time to change basic terminology.

A more practical solution is to consistently use initiative to mean setting the terms of battle throughout the manual and avoid its use in any other connotation. As part of this effort, this tenet requires a more detailed explanation. For instance, the terms of battle must be identified if they are to be set. The relationship between freedom of action, agility and initiative also needs to be clarified. If the authors of AirLand Battle intended, as I think they did, that initiative can be exercised simultaneously in a manner similar to Boyd's time-competitive observation-orientation-decision-action cycles, then this must be explicitly stated. Finally, given the Army's strategic

orientation, the treatment of initiative in the defense must be expanded and examples given of the forms it might take in addition to the counterattack.

The confusion over the term "initiative" is the predictable result of assigning a special meaning to a word which is already burdened with a variety of connotations. However, now that it has been given a key place in AirLand Battle doctrine, greater precision is required. In the end, two kinds of initiative (individual initiative and setting the terms of battle) are enough for one doctrine.

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